



What about dummies?

A dummy, also known as a 'pacifier' or 'soother' is commonly used to comfort babies.

Sucking a dummy can help settle babies and prevent them from sucking their thumbs or other objects.



The World Health Organisation (WHO) does not recommend the use of dummies in breastfeeding infants (Australian National Breastfeeding Strategy 2010-2015) as research has found a link between dummy use and babies not being breastfed as long.

Since this recommendation may not always be practical for caregivers of babies and young children, this pamphlet provides information about the dos and don'ts of using dummies. If you have concerns that are not answered here, please seek advice from your doctor or child health nurse.

Breastfeeding

Babies use a different type of sucking on the dummy from the breast. Therefore it can be difficult for them to suck on the nipple as well as is necessary to keep up a good supply of breast milk.

- To allow breastfeeding to be well established and encourage babies to breastfeed for longer, only introduce dummies after the baby is at least 4 weeks old
- To stop dummy sucking from affecting breast feeding, only offer the dummy after or between feeds when the baby is not hungry.

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or 'cot death' refers to a major group of deaths in infants aged between one month and one year old.

Although the exact cause of SIDS is still unknown, **some** evidence suggests that the use of dummies may decrease the risk of SIDS. Until there is stronger evidence to support this, SIDS and Kids (2005) makes no recommendation about dummy use. However breastfeeding is thought to reduce the risk of SIDS.

Based on clear evidence, SIDS and Kids (2005) recommends putting babies to sleep on their back, with their face uncovered, in a safe, smoke free environment as best practices to lower the risk of SIDS and fatal sleep accidents.

Dental issues

- For normal teeth and jaw development, it is ideal for children to stop sucking on a dummy when they are about 2 years old. Children who use a dummy beyond the age of 3 should stop before their permanent teeth come through (i.e. around 5-6 years of age).
- To avoid tooth decay, never coat dummies with anything sweet (e.g. sugar, honey, glycerine).

When bottles are used as a comforter

Some children choose a bottle as a comforter.

If milk or juice is given in the bottle, natural sugars in these drinks can damage children's teeth if they continually suck on the bottle.

- Do not allow babies to fall asleep with milk bottles. Give only water in the bottle between feeds.
- Encourage babies to start drinking water from a training cup from around 6 months of age.
- From 12 months of age wean babies from the bottle and start giving milk from a training cup.

Speech Development

Long term use of dummies and bottles can increase the risk of children developing speech problems such as a lisp.

- Discourage children from walking around with a pacifier or bottle in their mouth- this may prevent them from attempting to talk.



References:

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SIDS and kids safe sleeping 2005, 'Information Statement- Pacifier/ Dummy Use', available online: www.sidsandkids.org/documents/DummyuseInformationStatement.pdf (Accessed 01/03/2010)

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